

Minimum Survey Vendor Business Requirements

National Implementation of the In-Center Hemodialysis CAHPS (ICH CAHPS) Survey

The ICH CAHPS minimum business requirements (MBRs) described within this document are applicable to survey organizations at the time of application. The vendor must continue to meet these MBRs after an initial application is submitted up to and any point after approval is granted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

Criteria	Requirement
Relevant Organizational Experience	
Number of Years in Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 3 years.
Number of Years Conducting Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum of 2 years conducting surveys with individuals. • Minimum of 2 years conducting surveys using mode of administration. • For purposes of the ICH CAHPS Survey, a “survey of individuals” is defined as the collection of data from individuals selected by statistical sampling methods and the data collected are used for statistical purposes. Polling questions, focus groups, cognitive interviews, surveys of fewer than 600 individuals, surveys that did not involve statistical sampling methods, internet or web surveys, and interactive voice recognition surveys will not satisfy the “survey of individuals” requirement. • CMS reserves the right to request a past performance evaluation from the vendor or CAHPS contractor.
Work with RTI International	
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTI International (“RTI”) serves as the ICH CAHPS Survey Coordination Team. In this role, RTI provides oversight to CMS-approved ICH CAHPS Survey vendors. To avoid a potential conflict of interest, vendors must not have any existing or future work with RTI while actively implementing and submitting data for the ICH CAHPS Survey. • Vendor must disclose any existing or future contracts with RTI that fall under the specifications in the bullet above. • CMS reserves the right to request additional information and/or documentation of vendor’s work with RTI.
Survey Capability and Capacity	
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Director (Survey Administrator) with relevant survey experience. • Computer programmer with experience in electronically receiving large encrypted data files in different formats/software packages from an external organization, processing survey data needed for survey administration and survey response data, preparing data files for electronic submission, and submitting data files to an external organization.

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Criteria	Requirement
Facilities and Systems	<p>Has the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A secure commercial work environment. CMS may permit home-based or virtual interviewers or mail survey staff to administer the ICH CAHPS survey. An Exceptions Request Form (ERF) must be submitted and approved by CMS prior to administering the survey using virtual staff. • Physical facilities and electronic equipment and software to securely download sample data from the ICH CAHPS website, to collect and process ICH CAHPS Survey data, and to upload ICH CAHPS data to the Data Center. • If offering telephone surveys: the equipment, software, and facilities (unless an ERF for remote telephone staff is approved) to conduct CATI interviews and to monitor interviewers. • Systems needed to protect the security of personally identifiable information/protected health information (PII/PHI) AND survey data received from patients (e.g., password protections, firewalls, data encryption software, personnel access limitation procedures, and virus and spyware protection).
Working with Other Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure compliance with all ICH CAHPS protocols, a vendor that works with other organizations (as a subcontractor, partner, or prime through collaboration, merger, or acquisition) must disclose and describe the details of this working relationship to the ICH CAHPS Coordination Team.
Mail-Only Survey Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain and verify addresses of sampled patients. • Print professional-quality survey questionnaires and materials according to formatting guidelines. • Merge and print sample patient name and address, and the name of his or her current dialysis facility on personalized mail survey cover letters and print unique sample identification on the survey questionnaire. • Mail a prenotification letter and survey package to all sample patients. • Receive and process (key entry or scanning) completed questionnaires received. • Track and identify nonrespondents for follow-up mailing. • Provide a toll-free customer support line and respond to calls from sample members within 48 hours. • Assign final status codes to describe the final result of work on each sampled case.

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Criteria	Requirement
Telephone-Only Survey Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verify telephone numbers. • Print according to formatting guidelines and mail a prenotification letter to all sample patients. • Develop computer programs for electronically administering the survey (for CATI). • Collect data using CATI. • Schedule callbacks to nonrespondents at varying times of the day and week. • Provide a toll-free customer support line and respond to calls from sample members within 48 hours. • Assign final status codes to reflect the results of attempts to obtain completed interview with sampled cases.
Mixed-Mode Survey Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to all mail-only and telephone-only survey administration requirements (described above). • Track cases from mail survey through telephone follow-up activities.
Data Processing and File Submission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scan or key data from completed mail surveys. • Develop data files and edit and clean data according to standard protocols. • Follow all data cleaning and data submission rules, including verifying that data files are de-identified and contain no duplicate cases. • Export data from the electronic data collection system to an XML template, confirm that the data were exported correctly, and confirm that the XML files are formatted correctly and contain the correct data headers and data records. • Submit data electronically in the specified format (XML) to the ICH CAHPS secured website. • Work with the Coordination Team to resolve data problems and data submission problems.

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Criteria	Requirement
Adherence to Quality Assurance Guidelines and Participation in QA Activities	
Demonstrated Quality Control Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate well-documented quality control procedures (as applicable) for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – in-house training of staff involved in survey operations – printing, mailing, and recording of receipt of survey questionnaires – telephone administration of survey – coding and editing of survey data and survey-related materials – scanning or keying in of survey data – preparation of final person-level data files for submission – all other functions and processes that affect the administration of the ICH CAHPS Survey • Participate in any conference calls and site visits requested by the Coordination Team as part of overall quality monitoring activities. Site visits will be conducted with all approved vendors, and their subcontractors, if needed. • Provide documentation as requested for site visits and conference calls, including but not limited to staff training records, telephone interviewer monitoring records, and file construction documentation.
Documentation Requirements	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep electronic or hardcopy files of individuals trained and their training dates. • Maintain electronic or hardcopy records of interviewers monitored (for telephone administration). • Maintain electronic or hardcopy records of mailing dates. • Maintain other documentation necessary to allow the Coordination Team to review procedures implemented during a site visit. • Maintain documentation of actions required (and taken) as a result of any decisions made during site visits by the Coordination Team.
Adhere to All Protocols and Specifications and Agree to Participate in Training Sessions and Quality Assurance Activities	
Survey Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the Introduction and Vendor Update training sessions. • Ensure that appropriate subcontractor staff participate in all vendor training sessions.
Administer the Survey According to All Survey Specifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and follow all procedures described in the <i>ICH CAHPS Survey Administration and Specifications Manual</i> that are applicable to the selected survey data collection mode.